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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - JANUARY 22

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

#### Rwandan Soldiers in the DRC

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¶2. (SBU) A MONUC spokesperson was quoted in the press as confirming that between 3,500 and 4,000 Rwandan soldiers are now on DRC territory. GDRC spokesperson Lambert Mende, however, announced that the Rwandans are in country only for an observation mission, not for the purpose of engaging directly in fighting, and will monitor the FARDC's disarmament of the FDLR.

¶3. (SBU) Two wealthy and well-connected Goma businessmen told Goma PolOff on January 21 that they had seen an operational plan that calls for four Rwandan brigades to deploy to North and South Kivu. They claimed there are already 6,500 Rwandan troops in North Kivu, and that they have moved rapidly to take positions north of Masisi including Nyabiondo, Pinga and Mohanga. On January 25, these forces will reportedly be joined by two more brigades that will cross into South Kivu near Bukavu. The two Rwandan groups will then perform a pincer movement on FDLR forces in both Kivus, effectively eradicating the rebels from areas of greatest concentration over a period of 90 days. The majority of the fighting will be done by Rwandan soldiers, as the FARDC is not a credible fighting force, according to the businessmen. The businessmen lamented the return of Rwandan forces and opined that President Kabila is playing a very dangerous game, as the Rwandans are unlikely to leave quickly.

¶4. (SBU) A MONUC contact in Bukavu told Goma PolOff that a FDLR battalion commander in South Kivu called to brief him on planned FDLR movements. The contact said he has received reports of FDLR fighters who are worried about the Rwandan offensive and wish to give up and/or repatriate. A FARDC Colonel likewise reported that many of these fighters wish to surrender or repatriate. He said the joint Rwanda/DRC operations will include broadcasts over the next days urging FDLR combatants to turn themselves in or face the consequences.

#### Internal CNDP Dynamics

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¶5. (SBU) A contact from the Belgian embassy forwarded to post a report which claims that Nkunda gave a radio interview to RFI on January 19. He reportedly said during this interview that hostilities between the CNDP and FARDC are now over, as all are working together against the FDLR, and that the internal discord within the CNDP is also now over, with Ntaganda having returned to the chain of command (Note: We have not located a definitive transcript of this interview. End note).

Comment

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¶6. (SBU) Permitting Rwandan soldiers on Congolese territory, particularly in such large numbers, is a significant gamble for the GDRC, both in terms of general waning public support and its recent rapprochement with Rwanda. We are unaware at this point of any public unrest in Kinshasa, Goma, or elsewhere as a result of the RDF presence, but memories of the previous Rwandan occupation still run deep within the population and tensions could easily flare. Furthermore, if operations against the FDLR are in any way unsuccessful, both the GDRC and GoR will inevitably point fingers at one another, dealing a serious setback to the recent warming of relations, with RDF units still on DRC soil.

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